

Consumer Information and Procedures

-- Resolving Phone Problems and Disputes

Informal Complaints

If you have a question about a telephone utility bill or service, first contact the telephone company. This can be done by telephone, by letter, or in person. No special form is needed. The telephone number and address of the telephone utility is printed on your bill. It will also be in your local telephone directory.

If a problem cannot be solved with the Customer Service Representative, ask to have a supervisor hear the complaint. Each telephone company has employees available who will try to settle the problem fairly.

If a solution does not seem to be available from the company, contact the Illinois Commerce Commission. The Commission's Consumer Services Division will start an informal investigation in an effort to settle the dispute.

Complaints which are filed with the Commission's Consumer Services Division may take two to four weeks to resolve. Emergency complaints are given first priority. After taking the information, the Consumer Counselor will contact the company to learn the company's position on the complaint. The counselor will attempt to solve the complaint within the framework of the Commission's rules.

If your complaint involves a bill, the company will not shut off your service if you pay either the undisputed portion of the bill or the amount paid for the same billing period in the previous year. While complaints are being investigated, you still must pay all current bills and continue discussion with the company to settle the complaint.

Formal Complaints

If you are not able to reach an agreement with the company through the Commission's informal process, you may file a formal complaint with the Commission. Formal complaint forms may be ordered at the culmination of an informal complaint, and you should request them from the Consumer Counselor handling your informal complaint. After the formal complaint forms have been filed with the Commission, you will be mailed a notice showing the hearing date and time. The hearing will take place before an impartial Illinois Commerce Commission hearing examiner. The Commission hearing is similar to a court hearing with a court reporter recording the proceedings. You may use the services of a lawyer, but it is not required. The company is usually represented by its lawyers. The hearing examiner will consider your testimony and evidence and that of the company. You have the responsibility to prove the merits of the complaint. The Commission will then review all the evidence and make a decision on the case.

Special Problems

If you move, you must tell your telephone company. If the company is not told, you may have to pay for service at the old residence even after moving and someone else has moved in and is using the service.

If you are away from home for a long period of time, you must make arrangements to pay utility bills while away in order to avoid having your service shut off.